

*Gift of Hon. J. Thorndike, 1818.*

278

# INFORMATION

TO THOSE WHO WOULD REMOVE TO

## AMERICA,

*Written some Time since by DR. BENJAMIN FRANKLIN.*

MANY persons in Europe having, directly or by letters, expressed to the writer of this, who is well acquainted with North America, their desire of transporting and establishing themselves in that country; but who appear to him to have formed, through ignorance, mistaken ideas and expectations of what is to be obtained there; he thinks it may be useful, and prevent inconvenient, expensive, and fruitless, removals and voyages of improper persons, if he gives some clearer and truer notions of that part of the world than appear to have hitherto prevailed.

He finds it is imagined by numbers that the inhabitants of North America are rich, capable of rewarding and disposed to reward all sorts of ingenuity; that they are, at the same time, ignorant of all the sciences; and, consequently, that strangers, possessing talents in the belles lettres, fine arts, &c. must be highly esteemed, and so well paid as to become easily rich themselves; that there is also abundance of profitable offices to be disposed of, which the natives are not qualified to fill; and that, having few persons of family among them, strangers of birth must be greatly respected, and, of course, easily obtain the best of those offices, which will make all their fortunes; that the governments too, to encourage emigrations from Europe, not only pay the expense of personal transportation, but give lands gratis to strangers, with negroes to work for them, utensils of husbandry, and stocks of cattle. — These are all wild imaginations: and those, who go to America with expectations founded upon them, will surely find themselves disappointed.

The truth is, that, though there are in that country few people so miserable as the poor of Europe, there are also very few that in Europe would be called rich. It is rather a general happy mediocrity that prevails. There are few great proprietors of the soil, and few tenants; most people cultivate their own lands, or follow some handicraft or merchandise; very few are rich enough to live idly upon their rents or incomes, or to pay the high prices given in Europe for paintings, statues, architecture, and the other works of art that are more curious than useful. Hence the natural geniuses that have arisen in America, with such talents, have uniformly quitted that country for Europe, where they can be more suitably rewarded. It is true, that letters and mathematical knowledge are in esteem there, but they are, at the same time, more common than is appre-

hended; there being already existing nine colleges, or universities, viz. four in New England, and one in each of the states of New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Maryland, and Virginia; all furnished with learned professors; besides a number of smaller academies. These educate many of their youth in the languages, and those sciences that qualify men for the professions of divinity, law, and physic. Strangers, indeed, are by no means excluded from exercising those professions; and the increase of inhabitants every where gives them a chance of employ, which they have in common with the natives. Of civil offices or employments, there are few; no superfluous ones as in Europe: and it is a rule, established in some of the states, that no office should be so profitable as to make it desirable. The 36th article of the constitution of Pennsylvania runs expressly in these words: "As every free-man, to preserve his independence, (if he has not a sufficient estate,) ought to have some profession, calling, trade, or farm, whereby he may honestly subsist, there can be no necessity for, nor use in, establishing offices of profit; the usual effects of which are dependence and servility, unbecoming freemen, in the possessors and ex-pestants; faction, contention, corruption, and disorder, among the people. Wherefore, whenever an office, through increase of fees, or otherwise, becomes so profitable as to occasion many to apply for it, the profits ought to be lessened by the legislature."

These ideas prevailing more or less in all the United States, it cannot be worth any man's while, who has a means of living at home, to expatriate himself in hopes of obtaining a profitable civil office in America. And as to military offices, they are at an end with the war, the armies being disbanded. Much less is it advisable for a person to go thither who has no other quality to recommend him than his birth. In Europe it has, indeed, its value; but it is a commodity that cannot be carried to a worse market than to that of America, where people do not inquire, concerning a stranger, *What is he?* but *What can he do?* If he has any useful art he is welcome; and, if he exercises it and behaves well, he will be respected by all that know him. But a mere man of quality, who, on that account, wants to live upon the public, by some office or salary, will be despised and disregarded. The husbandman is in honour there, and even the mechanic, because their

c L. 1796.

their employments are useful. The people have a saying, that God Almighty is himself a mechanic; the greatest in the universe: and he is respected and admired more for the variety, ingenuity, and utility, of his handiworks, than for the antiquity of his family. They are pleased with the observation of a negro, and frequently mention it; that Boccarorra (meaning the white man) make de black man workee, make de horse workee, make de ox workee, make ebery ting workee, only de hog. He, de hog, no workee; he eat, he drink, he walk about, he go to sleep when he please, he libb like a gentleman. According to these opinions of the Americans, one of them would think himself more obliged to a genealogist, who could prove for him that his ancestors and relations for ten generations had been ploughmen, smiths, carpenters, turners, weavers, or even shoe-makers, and, consequently, that they were useful members of society, than if he could only prove that they were gentlemen, doing nothing of value, but living idly on the labour of others; mere *fruges consumere nati*\*; and otherwise good for nothing; till, by their death, their estates, like the carcase of the negro's gentleman-hog, come to be cut up.

With regard to encouragements to strangers from government, they are really only what are derived from good laws and liberty. Strangers are welcome, because there is room enough for them all, and therefore the old inhabitants are not jealous of them; the laws protect them sufficiently, so that they have no need of the patronage of great men; and every one will enjoy securely the profits of his industry. But, if he does not bring a fortune with him, he must work and be industrious to live. One or two years residence gives him all the rights of a citizen; but the government does not at present, whatever it may have done in former times, hire people to become settlers, by paying their passages, giving land, negroes, utensils, stock, or any other kind of emolument whatsoever. In short, America is the land of labour, and by no means what the English call *Lubberland*, and the French, *Pays de Cocagne*; where the streets are said to be paved with half-peck loaves; the houses tiled with pancakes; and where fowls fly about, ready roasted, crying, *Come, eat me*.

Who, then, are the kinds of persons to whom an emigration to America may be advantageous? And what are the advantages they may reasonably expect?

Land being cheap in that country, from the vast forests still void of inhabitants, and not likely to be occupied in an age to come, (inasmuch, that the property of a hundred acres of fertile soil, full of wood, may be obtained near the frontiers, in many places, for eight or ten guineas,) hearty young labouring men, who understand the husbandry of corn and cattle, (which is nearly the same in that country as in Europe,) may easily establish themselves there. A little money, saved of the good wages they receive there while they work for others, enables them to buy the land and begin their plantation, in which they are assisted by their neighbours and some credit. Multitudes of

poor people, from England, Ireland, Scotland, and Germany, have, by this means, in a few years become wealthy farmers; who, in their own countries, where all the lands are fully occupied, and the wages of labour low, could never have emerged from the mean condition wherein they were born.

From the salubrity of the air, the healthiness of the climate, the plenty of good provisions, and the encouragement to early marriages by the certainty of subsistence in cultivating the earth, the increase of inhabitants by natural generation is very rapid in America, and becomes still more so by the accession of strangers. Hence there is a continual demand for more artificers, of all the necessary and useful kinds, to supply those cultivators of the earth with houses, and with furniture and utensils of the grosser sorts, which cannot so well be brought from Europe. Tolerably good workmen, in any of those mechanic arts, are sure to find employ, and to be well paid for their work; there being no restraints preventing strangers from exercising any arts they understand, nor any permission necessary. If they are poor, they begin first as servants or journeymen; and, if they are sober, industrious, and frugal, they soon become masters, establish themselves in business, marry, raise families, and become respectable citizens.

Also, persons of moderate fortunes and capitals, who, having a number of children to provide for, are desirous of bringing them up to industry, and of securing estates for their posterity, have opportunities of doing it in America which Europe does not afford. There they may be taught and practise profitable mechanic arts, without incurring disgrace on that account; but, on the contrary, acquiring respect by such abilities. There, small capitals laid out in lands, which daily become more valuable by the increase of people, afford a solid prospect of ample fortunes hereafter for those children. The writer of this has known several instances of large tracts of land, bought, on what was then the frontier of Pennsylvania, for ten pounds per hundred acres; which, after twenty years, when the settlements had been extended far beyond them, sold readily, without any improvement made upon them, for three pounds per acre. The acre in America is the same with the English acre or the acre of Normandy.

Those, who desire to understand the state of government in America, would do well to read the constitutions of the several States, and the articles of confederation that bind the whole together for general purposes, under the direction of one assembly, called the Congress. These constitutions have been printed, by order of Congress, in America; two editions of them have also been printed in London; and a good translation of them into French has lately been published at Paris.

Several of the princes of Europe, having of late formed an opinion of advantage, to arise by producing all commodities and manufactures within their own dominions, so as to diminish or render useless their importations, have endeavoured to entice workmen from other countries, by

\* There are a number of us, born  
Merely to eat up the corn, ——— WATTS.



high salaries, privileges, &c. Many persons, pretending to be skilled in various great manufactures, imagining that America must be in want of them, and that Congress would probably be disposed to imitate the princes above-mentioned, have proposed to go over, on condition of having their passages paid, lands given, salaries appointed, exclusive privileges for terms of years, &c. Such persons, on reading the articles of confederation, will find that Congress have no power committed to them, or money put into their hands, for such purposes. And that, if any such encouragement is given, it must be by the government of some separate state. This, however, has rarely been done in America; and, when it has been done, it has rarely succeeded so as to establish a manufacture, which the country was not yet so ripe for as to encourage private persons to set it up; labour being generally too dear there, and hands difficult to be kept together, every one desiring to be a master, and the cheapness of land inclining many to leave trades for agriculture. Some, indeed, have met with success, and are carried on to advantage; but they are generally such as require only a few hands, or wherein great part of the work is performed by machines. Goods, that are bulky, and of so small value as not well to bear the expense of freight, may often be made cheaper in the country than they can be imported; and the manufacture of such goods will be profitable wherever there is a sufficient demand. The farmers in America produce, indeed, a deal of wool and flax; and none is exported, it is all worked up; but it is in the way of domestic manufacture for the use of the family. The buying up quantities of wool and flax, with the design to employ spinners, weavers, &c. and form great establishments, producing quantities of linen and woollen goods for sale, has been several times attempted in different provinces; but those projects have generally failed, goods of equal value being imported cheaper. And, when the governments have been solicited to support such schemes, by encouragements in money, or by imposing duties on the importation of such goods, it has been generally refused, on this principle, that, if the country is ripe for the manufacture, it may be carried on by private persons to advantage; and, if not, it is a folly to think of forcing nature. Great establishments of manufacture require great numbers of poor to do the work for small wages; these poor are to be found in Europe, but will not be found in America till the lands are all taken up and cultivated, and the excess of people, who cannot get land, want employment. The manufacture of silk, they say, is natural in France, as that of cloth in England, because each country produces in plenty the first material. But, if England will have a manufacture of silk as well as that of cloth, and France one of cloth as well as that of silk; these unnatural operations must be supported by mutual prohibitions, or high duties on the importation of each other's goods; by which means, the workmen are enabled to tax the home-consumer by greater prices, while the higher wages they receive make them neither happier nor richer, since they only drink more and work less. Therefore, the governments in America do nothing to encourage such projects. The people, by this means, are

not imposed on either by the merchant or mechanic. If the merchant demands too much profit on imported goods, they buy of the shoemaker; and, if he asks too high a price, they take them of the merchant. Thus the two professions are checks on each other. The shoemaker, however, has, on the whole, a considerable profit on his labour in America, beyond what he had in Europe; as he can add to his price a sum nearly equal to all the expenses of freight and commission, risk, or insurance, &c. necessarily charged by the merchant. And the case is the same with the workmen in every other mechanic art. Hence it is, that artisans generally live better and more easily in America than in Europe; and such as are good economists make a comfortable provision for age and for their children. Such may, therefore, remove with advantage to America.

In the old long-settled countries of Europe, all arts, trades, professions, farms, &c. are so full, that it is difficult for a poor man, who has children, to place them where they may gain, or learn to gain, a decent livelihood. The artisans, who fear creating future rivals in business, refuse to take apprentices but upon conditions of money, maintenance, or the like, which the parents are unable to comply with. Hence the youth are dragged up in ignorance of every gainful art, and obliged to become soldiers, servants, or thieves, for a subsistence. In America, the rapid increase of inhabitants takes away that fear of rivalry, and artisans willingly receive apprentices for the hope of profit by their labour, during the remainder of the time stipulated, after they shall be instructed. Hence it is easy for poor families to get their children instructed; for, the artisans are so desirous of apprentices, that many of them will even give money to the parents to have boys, from ten to fifteen years of age, bound apprentices to them till the age of twenty-one; and many poor parents have, by that means, on their arrival in the country, raised money enough to buy land sufficient to establish themselves, and to subsist the rest of their family by agriculture. These contracts for apprentices are made before a magistrate, who regulates the agreement according to reason and justice; and, having in view the formation of a future useful citizen, obliges the master to engage, by a written indenture, not only that, during the time of service stipulated, the apprentice shall be duly provided with meat, drink, apparel, washing, and lodging, and at its expiration with a complete suit of clothes, but also that he shall be taught to read, write, and cast accounts; and that he shall be well instructed in the art and profession of his master, or some other, by which he may afterwards gain a livelihood, and be able, in his turn, to raise a family. A copy of this indenture is given to the apprentice or his friends, and the magistrate keeps a record of it, to which recourse may be had, in case of failure by the master in any point of performance. This desire among the masters, to have more hands employed in working for them, induces them to pay the passages of young persons of both sexes, who, on their arrival, agree to serve them one, two, three, or four, years; those, who have already learned a trade, agreeing for a shorter term, in proportion to their skill, and the consequent

quent immediate value of their service; and those, who have ~~been~~ <sup>have</sup> ~~agreed~~ <sup>agreed</sup> for a longer term, in consideration of being taught an art their poverty would not permit them to acquire in their own country.

The almost-general mediocrity of fortune that prevails in America obliging its people to follow some business for subsistence, those vices, that arise usually from idleness, are in a great measure prevented. Industry and constant employment are great preservatives of the morals and virtue of a nation. Hence bad examples to youth are more rare in America, which must be a comfortable consideration to parents. To this may be truly added, that serious religion, under its various denominations, is not only tolerated, but respected and practised. Atheism is unknown there, infidelity rare and secret; so that persons may live to a great age in that country without having their piety shocked by meeting with either an atheist or an infidel. And the Divine Being seems to have manifested his approbation of the mutual forbearance and kindness with which the different sects treat each other, by the remarkable prosperity with which he has been pleased to favour the whole country.

The agents just take the liberty of adding to the information given by the above-mentioned celebrated philosopher and legislator, (which they now disseminate, in order, as much as in them lies, to prevent unsuccessful removals to America,) that men, going thither, may as well expect to find the streets paved with half-peck loaves, as to find consignees, merchants, shop-keepers, inn-holders, negroe-huts for selling whisky, and house-keepers disposed to let their lodgings, and open boarding-houses, so replete with the milk of human compassion as to give indiscriminate entertainment to every one introduced to their civilities, and forbear the various exorbitant extortions which such a flood of emigrants gives them but too fair an opportunity of exercising. The settlers wisest course would be immediately to encounter the fatigue of repairing to the land they are entitled to, or intend to settle on, and betake themselves to the cultivation thereof, and they will gradually, and with a speed proportioned to their diligence, find themselves free from the temptation to talk nonsense in boarding-houses, while the seemingly-gaping landlord is lightening their purses.

London, March 24, 1796.

The agents, in conformity with their avowed principles of contravening no laws of the land in which they live, and of justice, compassion, and good will, towards their fellow-creatures, have uniformly, not only declined treating with such persons as the laws prohibit, but informed all applicants to them, that America was too young to give such encouragements to the arts as are to be found in the mother-country; and that persons, going to America, leaving good trades with a view of bettering their condition, by following their occupations there, would generally find themselves miserably disappointed. For a proof of this candid conduct, they are free to appeal to all their acquaintance. They, therefore, think it peculiarly nefarious and unjust in those who fabricate and disseminate reports, indiscriminately ranking them with crimps, inveiglers, and other opprobrious characters. They do not deny the existence of such reptiles, but are unacquainted with them, and desire to remain so. Their lands do not lie in any ethereal region, but are well-known to exist on terra firma, in a country the child of this, now come of age to set up for herself. As swindlers have time out of mind abounded here, some have heretofore been transported to that country; and, for aught the agents know, some of the gipsy-blood may be still apparent in their progeny; and some, they doubt not, may have transported themselves. The agents, therefore, are aware, that swindling land-jobbers may endeavour to palm themselves upon their office, but they hope they have hitherto avoided them; and they take the greatest care in their power to avoid them, and offer no lands for sale that they cannot identify, and procure clear and honourable documents concerning their quality, situation, and title.

Men, who wish to hold lands in America, and settle thereon, would do well to consider, that they cannot cross the ocean, nor travel through forests, without contending with the elements and enduring fatigue; nor bring wild land into cultivation without labour. Such as cannot reconcile themselves to these conflicts had better decline the attempt.

There can be no good use in settlers loitering in a crowded town like Norfolk, whither a pestilence has been imported from the belligerent islands, and where every accommodation must be scarce and expensive, and every circumstance arise to give them a disgust at a country and its inhabitants, neither of which can they, by these means, become even tolerably acquainted with.

*Our Motto is, ENDURE, BUT HOPE.*

BARRELL AND SERVANTÉ,

Removed from No. 24, Threadneedle-Street, to  
No. 6, Ingram-Court, Fenchurch-Street.

